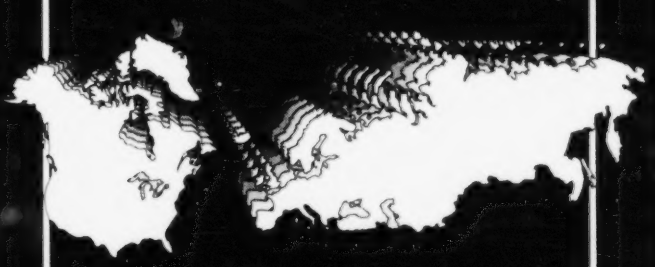
# ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE (ECE)



UNITED NATIONS
Geneva

# INTRODUCING UN/ECE

All international organizations with European responsibilities feel the impact of events which are transforming the political, economic and social order in the region, and none more so than the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE).

For more than 40 years, UN/ECE was the unique instrument of economic dialogue and cooperation between two radically different political and economic systems. It is still today the only permanent intergovernmental forum for economic cooperation covering all the countries of Europe, Canada, Israel and the United States.

In the space of three years (1991 - 1993) the membership of ECE rose from 34 to 53 countries, mainly as a result of the emergence of newly independent States in the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Yugoslav Federation and the separation of the Czech and Slovak Republics.

The end of east-west confrontation and the start of an era of concerted action and common purpose have changed the very nature of ECE. Until the late nineteen-eighties ECE was regarded by many as a "club of the rich", a gathering of industrialized nations spanning the northern hemisphere. In the final decade of the twentieth century, the picture is very different; nearly half the member States are receiving special technical assistance as they make the difficult transition from centrally-planned to market economies.

## MEMBER STATES OF UN/ECE
(December 1993)

**Albania**
**Andorra**
**Armenia**
**Austria**
**Azerbaijan**
**Belarus**
**Belgium**
**Bosnia-Herzegovina**
**Bulgaria**
**Canada**
**Croatia**
**Cyprus**
**Czech Republic**
**Denmark**
**Estonia**
**Finland**
**France**
**Germany**
**Georgia**
**Greece**
**Hungary**
**Iceland**
**Ireland**
**Israel**
**Italy**
**Kyrgyzstan**
**Latvia**
**Liechtenstein**
**Lithuania**
**Luxembourg**
**Malta**
**Monaco**
**Netherlands**
**Norway**
**Poland**
**Portugal**
**Republic of Moldova**
**Romania**
**Russian Federation**
**San Marino**
**Slovakia**
**Slovenia**
**Spain**
**Sweden**
**Switzerland**
**The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**
**Turkey**
**Turkmenistan**
**Ukraine**
**United Kingdom**
**United States of America**
**Uzbekistan**
**Yugoslavia**

ECE has had to respond rapidly to the needs of these countries. Several factors are helping ECE to meet the challenge. The first is a wealth of experience in the study and analysis of national economies and in the promotion of cooperation among all countries of the region. ECE also has accumulated expertise in developing regional strategies, concepts and policy recommendations and in drawing up international conventions, particularly in the fields of environmental protection and transport. The ECE structure is flexible, well adapted to an inter-disciplinary approach to problems. Finally, ECE has a proven record in

implementing recommendations of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

A major turning point came in 1990. It was then decided to give top priority to five aspects of the work of ECE: the protection of the environment, transport, statistics, trade facilitation, and economic analysis. Two guiding principles were established. The first is that the concept of sustainable development - modes of development which respect the human environment, minimize pollution, and make the least possible use of non-renewable resources - should permeate all ECE programmes. Secondly, the Commission underscored the importance of activities which would assist countries of central and eastern Europe to make the transition from centrally-planned to market economies.

**Structure of a new Europe**

The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) began the process which has created a new European architecture at Helsinki, Finland, in 1975 and, in so doing, deeply influenced ECE. It was logical that the Commission, its membership almost identical with that of CSCE, should be designated by the Helsinki conference as a key instrument of pan-European cooperation. Successive CSCE meetings have since reaffirmed the role that governments expect ECE to play in the protection of the environment and in promoting economic cooperation in several areas, including trade, industrial development, energy, statistics, transport, science and technology, and agriculture.

ECE has also been involved in other important developments such as the preparation of ministerial-level pan-European conferences on the environment, transport, energy and forestry.

The Commission participated in the establishment of new European regulations by adopting four international Conventions in the field of environmental protection (Convention on long-distance transboundary air pollution, Convention on environmental impact assessment in a transboundary context, Convention on transboundary effects of industrial accidents and Convention on the protection and utilization of transboundary weatercourses and international lakes) or

the Convention on combined transport and other agreements in the field of European transport infrastructure.

## International cooperation

Political, economic and social change in Europe, as just one of its consequences, highlights the forms of cooperation among international institutions and emphasizes their utility.

In its dual role as a regional commission of the United Nations and as a European institution, ECE cooperates closely with a number of other intergovernmental organizations and institutions, in particular the European Community (EC), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Council of Europe and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

Cooperation takes various forms, including joint projects, participation in negotiations on subjects of common interest leading to the adoption of binding regulations or other legal instruments, and a constant two-way flow of technical input. Cooperation may also simply consist of exchanging information to avoid duplication of effort.

As the only Europe-wide forum for economic and environmental cooperation, ECE finds increased opportunities in the 1990s to contribute with other institutions to a new spirit of concerted action and common purpose in the region. ECE is, for example, a vehicle by which means countries of central and eastern Europe may adopt standards and regulations already elaborated by OECD for its 24-member group. The European Community contributes to decision-making and adopts certain regulations negotiated in ECE as directives for its own member States. Currently, the European Community is collaborating with ECE in its programme of workshops designed to help countries in transition from a centrally planned to a market economy to find solutions to specific problems.

## UN/ECE MILESTONES

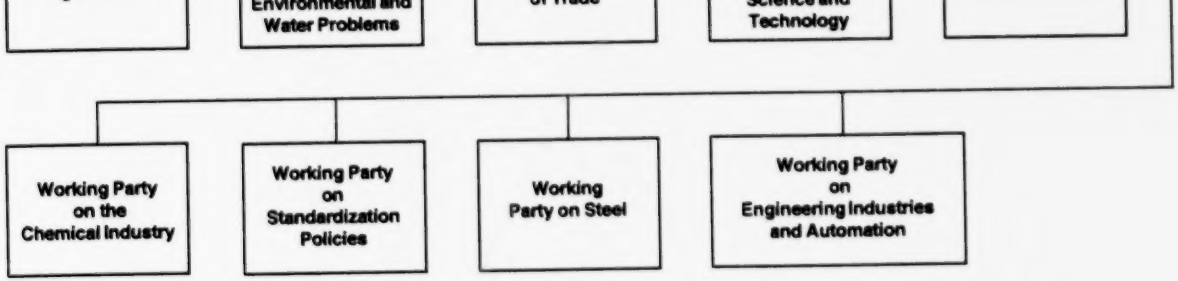
**1947**
**The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe was created on an experimental basis to promote concerted action for the economic reconstruction of Europe after the Second World War. ECE was the first of five regional commissions established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council. (The others: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific ESCAP; Economic Commission for Africa ECA; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean ECLAC and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia ESCWA.)**

**1951**
**ECE becomes a permanent organ of the United Nations.**

**1967**
**New areas of work were opened up in the fields of environmental protection, energy policy, economic perspectives, industrial cooperation, standardization and science and technology. The Commission was restructured, its methods of work were reviewed and coordination was improved. Trade, environment, science and technology and economic projections were given priority.**

**1975**
**The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in the provisions of the Final Act of Helsinki dealing with cooperation in economics, science, technology and the environment, referred to activities which might be itensified or undertaken within ECE. The Commission adapted its programme to take into account provisions of the Final Act that it could suitably implement. The follow-up meeting in Madrid, Spain, placed particular emphasis on the role of ECE in its concluding document.**

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
Senior Economic Advisers to ECE Governments
Timber Committee
Committee on Human Settlements
Committee on Energy
Inland Transport Committee
Committee on
Senior Advisers to ECE
Committee on the Development
Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on
Conference of European


Environmental and Water Problems
Science and Technology
Working Party on the Chemical Industry
Working Party on Standardization Policies
Working Party on Steel
Working Party on Engineering Industries and Automation

**1990**

**Following political and economic reforms in central and eastern Europe, the Commission established new priorities: environment, transport, statistics, trade facilitation, and economic analysis. Sustainable development was adopted as the guiding principle for all ECE activities. Methods of work were adapted and the structure and use of secretarial resources were modified to give ECE an effective role in assisting the countries concerned to make the transition from centrally planned to market economies.**

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## Private sector involvement

"What does it all mean to me?" someone in the industrial or commercial world may ask. The fact is that a great deal of the work of ECE has a direct impact on the private sector - particularly in the areas of trade and industrial cooperation, environment, energy, transport, agriculture, timber, and standardization. For that reason over 70 international professional organizations have consultative status with ECE, participate in its meetings, offer expert opinions and contribute to decision-making in areas - often highly technical - which affect the interests of their members.

ECE calls on specialists in the private sector for its research projects and studies, and members of the business community regularly participate in its seminars and study tours. Entrepreneurs and representatives of financial institutions take part in workshops, organized with the assistance of ECE, in the countries of central and eastern Europe.

Today, ECE relates to the business community in two ways: by providing information and preparing guides for the conduct of business in countries in transition.

*East-West Investment News*, a quarterly ECE publication, provides information for the business community on new legislation, investment trends, developments in privatization, and statistics,

particularly concerning countries in transition from centrally planned to market economies.

ECE pioneered seminars with the participation of the business community - on east-west trade promotion, marketing and business contacts. Surveys have been made of the types of economic, commercial and administrative information needed by the business community and of the problems encountered by small- and medium-sized enterprises in international trade. The private sector participates in ECE discussions on the financing of privatization and trade in central and eastern Europe.

**Extra-regional outreach**

The work of ECE has ramifications for the world at large. In the field of environment, the responsibilities of European and North American countries are global - a fact reflected in the emphasis on transboundary problems in the ECE work programme on air pollution, normalisation, and the UN/EDIFACT system (Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport), which is now used in vitrtually all parts of the world.

Other activities in standardization are of particular concern to countries outside the ECE region which export primary produce to Europe or which manufacture motor vehicles.

Work on the development of road and railway systems and combined transport affects directly the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, while the TIR carnet system is one of ECE's most valuable contributions to the rapid international movement of goods. Under the TIR system no frontier checks of goods transported are made between the Customs offices of departure and arrival. Originally drawn up for European road transport, the TIR Convention has been adopted by many countries in other continents, and particularly in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

In many fields, innovative action and research undertaken by ECE has served either as a model or as useful background for other United Nations regional economic commissions in their own programmes of cooperative action. A case in point is "Global Energy

Efficiency 21", a joint programme of the five regional commissions, which takes its inspiration from the UN/ECE project "Energy Efficiency 2000". The main aim of "Energy Efficiency 2000" is to enhance trade and cooperation in energy efficient, environmentally sound technologies and management practices between participating States and, in particular, between the former centrally planned economies and countries with a market-oriented economic system. ECE also contributes to global United Nations programmes. In the 1990s the Commission is responsible for the organization of regional meetings in Europe in preparation for world conferences on population and on women, and will have a role in regional follow-up activities. The Commission is also engaged in implementing the Agenda 21 programme adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro and in preparing the Social Summit scheduled for 1995.

**Methods of work**

The Commission holds an annual session to review overall policies and its work programme, and to make decisions on activities for the ensuing year as well as recommendations to its parent body, the Economic and Social Council. Ten principal subsidiary bodies and four working parties report directly to the Commission; more than 30 additional working parties and groups of experts report to one or other of the principal subsidiary bodies. The ECE secretariat, headed by the Executive Secretary, who has the rank of Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, is located at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.

CE's programme of meetings and workshops, seminars and study tours serves four interrelated purposes:

- the exchange of information which will help countries of the region to improve their economies and reinforce economic cooperation;
- the development of regulations, conventions and standards;
- measures to facilitate trade and transport; and

- the planning and execution of operational projects.

Some 150 meetings are arranged by ECE in Geneva each year with, in addition, around 20 seminars which are usually held in a member country and about 30 workshops which address specific problems of certain member countries in their transition from centrally planned to market economies. Approximately 70 studies or other publications, including 15 regular statistical bulletins, are issued each year. The principal annual publications in the field of economic analysis are the *Economic Survey of Europe* and the *Economic Bulletin for Europe*.

Governments make voluntary contributions that help support many ECE activities. They host seminars, workshops and study tours, provide experts to engage in research and prepare reports, and contribute to trust funds which finance the ECE planning and coordinating role in operational projects such as the Trans-European North-South Motorway (TEM) and the Trans-European Railway Network (TER), and in certain cases the participation at ECE meetings of delegates from countries of central and eastern Europe in transition from centrally planned to market economies.

**Meeting the challenge**

In a short span of time, ECE has demonstrated the capacity to respond effectively to profoundly changed circumstances in which the dominant factor is the transition of central and east European countries from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economic system and their integration into the global economy. This historic task calls for a great effort on the part of the international community. In cooperation with other directly concerned organizations, ECE has an important and distinctive contribution to make to the general mobilization of resources, skills and experience that the situation demands.

## UN/ECE EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES

| | |
|---|---|
| Gunnar Myrdal (Sweden) | 1947-1957 |
| Sakari Tuomioja (Finland) | 1957-1960 |
| Vladimir Velebit (Yugoslavia) | 1960-1967 |
| Janez Stanovnik (Yugoslavia) | 1968-1982 |
| Klaus Sahlgren (Finland) | 1983-1986 |
| Gerald Hinteregger (Austria) | 1987-1993 |
| Yves Berthelot | 1993- |

## UN/ECE FACT SHEETS

1. Introducing UN/ECE
2. Assistance o Countries in Transition
3. Environmentla Challenges
4. Inland Transport
5. Statistics:a new Environment
6. International Trade
7. Economic Analysis
8. Sustainable Energy Development
9. Industry, Science and Technology
10. Agriculture - the Changing Scene
11. Forests and Forest Products
12. Human Settlements
13. Standardization

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